

Geneva Steel

Condensed from the Oral Histories of Leo Loveridge

The steel plant this year is being dismantled and we will no longer have those buildings. It was built by and operated for the government, during the early part of World War II, actually before we were officially in the war.

It was situated in Geneva because they were afraid of attacks on the Pacific Coast. I think people were paranoid about that. The government wanted a place away from the coast but where they could secure raw materials readily.

Most of the iron ore came from Wyoming and near Cedar City; coal primarily from eastern Utah and Colorado. Other needed materials were readily available from Midwestern, even Eastern locations and could be shipped in because it was served by two railroads, with nationwide connections

Strategically it was an optimum place to build. After the war they put it up for sale and Kaiser, I understood, had the lowest bid, but wasn't considered sufficiently fluid at the time. So it was sold to U.S. Steel. They operated it until 1984.

Even though it was one of the more profitable divisions it seemed not quite part of the eastern "family" more like a "step-child." A year or so later, after the Cannons bought it, I went to work there for a second time "for a few months." It took nearly seven years to quit.

They made raw steel—slabs, plates and sheets. Some of the sheets and lighter plates were rolled into coils and sold in that form. For most of their existence a structural mill produced bars and different shapes—channels, angles, Zbar, etc. All of the steel products could be further processed and/or ultimately manufactured into anything requiring steel—tanks, trucks, howitzers, bathtubs, ships, automobiles, buildings, bridges, etc.—to name a few.

The Structural Mill was shut down some years prior to the mill closure in 1984 and orders for that product transferred to other US Steel mills. While open, a Pipe Mill to the north of the plant was constructed where much sheet and plate product was fabricated into pipe—now carrying oil, gas, water, etc., primarily throughout the West. They also produced many saleable by-products, such as benzene, toluene, xylene, ammonium nitrate, ammonium sulfate, etc.

We had a big customer base locally, along the coast and inland—even some overseas. It was a great thing for Utah County and Lehi. It was the biggest employer for many years. It supported lots of families. Over five thousand employees for some period of time. Without the taxes our area would have been in deep trouble.

I have no real knowledge about what is going to happen to the property now it is being dismantled. Interesting to see how they dig it up.

I worked for U.S. Steel, yes, after it had been sold. I came home from the war in January 1946, and didn't start at Geneva until March 1949, retiring in May 1986. I returned when the Cannons started it back up in December 1988 and left in September 1995.

Earlier, after High School graduation, I attended Henager's Business College in Salt Lake. They were a very strict, no-nonsense school that demanded students study and learn. I entered, thinking I would like to study Accounting. When they discovered I had taken type and shorthand in High School they strongly recommended taking a stenographic course first—then, if desired, going into Accounting later—perhaps attending evening classes.

This proved to be most extremely valuable to me later in the Military. After securing my Stenographic Certificate, they found me a job with Burlington Transportation Co. (a bus line) in Salt Lake, where I worked prior to and following my military service, until I went to work at Geneva.